



**Jacqueline Williams-Roll
Chief Human Resources Officer
General Mills, Inc.
Statement for the Record
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services
The Equality Act (H.R. 5): Ensuring the Right to Learn and Work Free from
Discrimination
April 9, 2019**

At General Mills, our purpose is to serve the world by making food people love. That means all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. On average, U.S. consumers are placing one of our products in their grocery baskets every ten seconds. So it just makes good business sense to value all of our consumers. That is why General Mills strongly supports the Equality Act.

As one of the world's largest food companies our portfolio includes iconic brands such as Cheerios, Nature Valley, Annie's, Progresso, Yoplait, and Betty Crocker, to name a few. We have 38,000 employees worldwide, with about half working in the United States. We are headquartered in Golden Valley, Minnesota – where we trace our roots back over 150 years – and last fiscal year had annual sales of \$15.6 billion.

Diversity and inclusion is not just the right thing to do, it's essential for the growth of our company. We want to recruit and retain the best talent. General Mills maintains an inclusive culture where we encourage employees to bring their whole selves to work. Walking the halls at General Mills you can see diversity prominently represented by *all* kinds of family pictures proudly displayed in peoples' offices. By enabling employees to be their true and authentic selves at work, they can focus their talents on bringing unique perspectives and new ideas to drive innovation in order to help the company grow.

Innovation is key to the success of the food industry. Consumer tastes are rapidly evolving, the way we market our products is becoming more dynamic, and manufacturing processes require skilled individuals to operate high-tech machines. In order to be successful for another 150 years and beyond, we need diverse thinkers with different backgrounds to make us a stronger company.

Our work environment is built on the foundation of our Equal Employment Opportunity policy, which prohibits discrimination based on age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, marital status, disability, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity, military service, or other characteristic protected by law. Sexual orientation has been a part of our policy since the early 1990s and we added gender identity in 2004. In 1999, we introduced Domestic Partner benefits, another demonstration that we are committed to providing equality to our LGBTQ employees in all of our employment benefits. And in



2011 we provided equal health coverage for transgender individuals without exclusion for medically necessary care.

We've taken other steps to support diversity. In the mid-1990s we created our LGBTQ network, Betty's Family, named after one of our most familiar icons – Betty Crocker. The network's mission is to create a safe, open and productive environment for General Mills' LGBTQ employees and allies. We recently launched the Betty's Family Supply Chain network to help connect employees in our over 20 manufacturing facilities in 13 states. Our employees comment frequently on the powerful impact this network has on our ability to recruit and retain top talent. We know these networks, in addition to our many other affinity groups, is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to attracting, developing and advancing every unique employee.

General Mills is proud that efforts like the above have helped make us an employer of choice, and we are consistently recognized as such. For many years we have achieved a 100 percent score on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index, which recognizes the policies and practices we have that are supportive of our LGBTQ employees. We've also been recognized as one of the Best Companies for Inclusion by the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, a top 50 Best Large Companies for Women and Diversity by Comparably and overall 50 Best Large Companies to Work For by Comparably. Recognitions like these contribute to our ability to recruit and retain talent.

In addition to promoting diversity because of its benefits to our business, we support the Equality Act because we believe it is a fundamental right of all American citizens to be treated fairly, with respect and dignity when it comes to employment; housing; credit; education; public spaces and services; federally funded programs and jury service, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

General Mills invests in the personal and professional development of our employees. With numerous brands and manufacturing facilities to learn about, employee's professional development often comes with relocating to different states. The patchwork of legal protections among the states leaves some of our employees vulnerable in their communities. One's sexual orientation or gender identity has nothing to do with their ability to be successful in their job at one of our plants and shouldn't be a barrier to professional growth. But some employees may be hesitant to take a new job in a state without protections. While we can support our employees within our walls, we want them to have happy and fulfilling lives outside of work. This legislation would protect all people, no matter what state they live in, from discrimination regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In conclusion, General Mills believes this legislation is good for our employees and thus for our business. The Equality Act will help us attract and retain top talent, create and support the diverse workforce necessary to spark creativity and innovation, and allow our employees to grow, progress and develop, wherever they may reside.



Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments for the committee record. Should you have any questions please refer to Mary Catherine Toker, Vice President of Government Relations, mary.toker@genmills.com.
